



Yellowstone River *Conservation District* Council

Meeting Minutes – October 23, 2008 MSU-Billings: College of Business Room 163

Members Present: Will Alexander, Carbon — Kenny Nemitz, Dawson— Tony Barone, Richland – Don Youngbauer Rosebud/MACD – Phil Fox, Treasure – Bob Hector, Yellowstone – Orvin Finsaas, McKenzie County, North Dakota – John Moorhouse, RAC Chair.

Others Present: George Jordan, USFWS/TAC; Pat Riley, DNRC; Laurie Zeller, DNRC; Laverne Ivie, Yellowstone CD; Guelda Halverson, Sweet Grass CD; Mack Cole, RAC; Art Gehnert, RAC; Nicole McClain, YRCDC Coordinator; Kelly Norwood, Project Assistant; Boris Krizek, City of Billings/RAC; and Carol Watts, Custer CD.

Chairman Don Youngbauer called the meeting to order at 10:24 am on October 23, 2008. Introductions were made.

Conservation District updates: Each Council member shared what was happening in their district since the last meeting.

TAC update: Technical Advisory Committee member George Jordan reported that there was a conference call prior to the Council meeting to discuss mapping of habitats for the fisheries SOW and to identify the best way to proceed forward given funding timelines. The following recommendations were made on the call and presented to the Council:

1. Delineate both low and bank full flows on the 2001 NAIP photography. This will allow the Fisheries SOW work to choose sample locations and get started sooner, while providing data for the efforts MFWP is conducting.
2. Obtain the exact dates for all aerial photography to allow determining discharge for each photo. This is necessary to understanding stage-discharge relationships of each photo.

In order to facilitate # 1, the TAC recommended modifying work order #5 of Contract 012 to allow DTM to complete mapping both bank full and low flow habitats on the 2001 NAIP photography. If approved, this modification would provide additional funding of \$10,321.00. Funding would come from the 2005 RDGP grant. Will Alexander made a motion to approve the request, John Moorhouse seconded, and it carried by voice vote.

In order to complete # 2, George indicated that this information should be available and the TAC will visit with Jim Robinson.

The TAC also recommends refining existing Channel Migration Zone (CMZ) mapping project utilizing LiDAR topographic data and extending the CMZ mapping into Park County at a cost of \$13,300. The funding will be covered from existing work orders that have balances remaining. Bob Hector made the motion to amend the 016 contract to include Park County so their data would be the same. Phil Fox seconded and the motion passed by voice vote.

Workshops are being planned for the CMZ mapping to be presented at county level to supervisors, city planners, county commissioners, realtors and other interested parties. Karin Boyd and Nicole McClain put together a tentative schedule and Nicole will contact the administrators to set up a time and place.

George Jordan indicated the TAC and US Army Corps of Engineers will be working on reviewing and revising the economics scope of work over the winter to present to the Council. This component of the cumulative effects study is described in the project management plan, but has not been finalized. The TAC would like to see it ready for possible 2009 ACOE funding by early spring. Progress will be made and the TAC will report at a winter or early spring meeting.

George Jordan noted that progress is being made designing workshops on the 310 Google data base for conservation district administrators. Two 1/2 day training sessions for District Administrators are being planned for late this fall/early winter.

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The next TAC meeting is October 29 and 30, 2008 at the DNRC building on Rimtop Drive in Billings.

George Jordan also reported that SH dam was in the process of being removed from the Tongue River and this will allow over 100 miles of additional fish habitat. Another project that he is involved with is working on installing screens at the Buffalo Rapids Irrigation District. The first project will be at the Shirley Pumping Facility. Partners in this project are the Buffalo Rapids Irrigation District, Natural Resources Conservation Service, US Bureau of Reclamation, and the US Fish and Wildlife Service. This first project is a pilot effort intended to serve a dual purpose. The project is being designed to reduce O&M costs to the district due to heavy algae loads and at the same time effectively prevent loss of fish by keeping them in the river.

Coordinator's report: The Coordinator Nicole McClain passed out a draft of the annual report. She asked that Council members make any changes and get the report back to her. She also asked for any changes that need to be made to the Dornix Park position paper.

The Cooperative Watershed Management Act (CWMA) does not include conservation districts. Montana will not receive any money if the wording is not changed. The bill is considered a threat to conservation districts. George Jordan suggested that a letter be written to the Montana congressional delegation stating that we oppose the bill and would be willing to work on a solution. Mack Cole will deliver the letter to Jon Tester.

Nicole McClain handed out information from Carla Lawrence, Beartooth RC&D concerning fuel for schools. There is a reference to Russian olive trees.

Business meeting: Carol Watts handed out the financial reports. The financial report is a print out of all transactions that have taken place since the last meeting. The grant statement shows the expenses and balances in the current grants. Tony Barone made a motion to accept the treasurer's report, John Moorhouse seconded and the motion carried by voice vote.

The September 12, 2008 meeting minutes were approved as written with Bob Hector making the motion, Kenny Nemitz seconded and the motion carried by voice vote.

The name of the Roundtable has been changed to Symposium. Laverne Ivie is working to schedule Pete Coors of Coors Distributing to be the keynote speaker on the opening day. Nicole presented ideas for the agenda. Because of scheduling conflicts the date for the Symposium will be February 3 and 4 of 2009. Nicole stated that it was the goal of the committee to make the Symposium interactive and not just be lectures.

MRRIC update: George Jordan attended the Missouri River Recovery Implementation Committee and reported for Dave Schwarz who was not in attendance today. He said the committee was composed of many different individuals representing a diverse group of stakeholders. He applauded Dave Schwarz for attending and being willing to work through the various procedural issues MRRIC was addressing during their first formal meeting. The committee was selected by the Army Corps of Engineers and will be instrumental in providing input on Missouri River Recovery efforts, of which could include providing recommendations to the Corps as they select/develop WRDA 3110 projects. Nicole noted that Dave Schwarz had worked hard to get tributaries of the Missouri River a seat on the committee. Because the Yellowstone is a major tributary to the Missouri, George felt that it was important for the Council to keep an active presence in MRRIC.

Partner updates: Laurie Zeller, DNRC, reported that the conservation districts will be asked to select a definition for a stream concerning 310 applications. The choices will be sent out to the districts and a discussion will be held at the MACD convention.

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Vice-Chairman's report: Bob Hector stated that a survey would be sent out to administrators to see what the individual conservation districts wanted to do in the future to keep the Yellowstone River Clean-up project going. It is hoped that this will be put on the agenda and discussed at board meetings.

RAC update: John Moorhouse reported there were two candidates for the Resources Advisory Committee; Craig Warner who has started the application procedure and Diana Taylor, who has shown interest.

John Moorhouse had the Salt Cedar Best Management Practice in the form of a brochure. It noted an appendix which was not included. The brochure will be revised to include it.

John Moorhouse introduced a proposed change to the standing rules concerning paying stipends to Resource Advisory Committee members. He made a motion to accept the change. There was no second and the motion died. A draft of the suggested revisions will be sent to all the conservation districts in the YRCDC and the Council members. Then, in order to help energize the RAC, a committee was formed including Laurie Zeller, John Moorhouse, Burt Williams, Nicole McClain and Warren Kellogg to work on ideas. Tony Barone felt that it was important that all the Council members be represented before any changes are made.

Kenny Nemitz wanted to know how the EQIP dollars for Russian olive control were being spent. Carol Watts said she would find out if it would be possible to have a tour of the projects in Custer County.

John Moorhouse commented that it would take very little effort to control Russian olive on the upper part of the Yellowstone River before it becomes a problem. John feels that this should be part of the outreach and education program and the right people should be contacted, he asked for ideas concerning this effort.

Chairman's Report: Don Youngbauer talked about the Yellowstone River Science Center saying that it would be a place to store information obtained from the Cumulative Effects study. Don questioned what role the Council would play. Nicole stated that there are other groups interested in doing a research center independent from what we are doing.

Floating Islands International is a company that does biological research of artificial wetlands. Don believes that they want a larger role in leadership of the Yellowstone River. The Council suggested that Floating Islands International be invited to a future meeting.

Montana Association of Conservation Districts (MACD) representation on the Council was questioned concerning the voting matrix of the Council. It was decided to ask MACD what their opinion is. Tony Barone said the role of the MACD representative is to keep the MACD informed. Don Youngbauer will discuss this with the MACD Directors.

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

The meeting adjourned at 2:40 pm. Items for the next agenda include the RAC reimbursement, the Symposium, TAC update, the CWMA, etc. There will be no meeting in November, the next meeting will be December 4, 2008 in Billings, MT. Location will be announced later.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Watts, CCCD Administrator